

Strategic Plan

2022-24



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Executive Summary

Honoring the Past

Throughout its history, Cottage Grove, Oregon has been a can-do community, one whose members are proud of their ability to roll up their sleeves and work together to accomplish common goals and find creative answers to common questions.

To that end, in 2001, area business owners banded together to form the Economic and Business Improvement District, tasked with creating an inviting community filled with thriving businesses and economic vitality. Over the years, EBID has developed All-America City Square, placed benches and furniture on Main Street, and managed the Hanging Basket program during the year's warm months.

Cottage Grove established its Main Street program, which utilizes a four-point approach to revitalize classic Main Streets, in 2008. It works to ensure that Cottage Grove has a thriving local economy, is rich in character, and features inviting public spaces that invoke a feeling of belonging among residents and visitors. Main Street events include the Halloween Howl, Shop Small Saturday, Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, and Hearts on Main fundraiser and activities in response to COVID-19.

Recognizing common purposes -- and interested in coming together for the betterment of Cottage Grove -- the EBID and Main Street Cottage Grove finalized a merger in September of 2020.

Performing in the Present

In February of 2021, board members of the newly merged organization, renamed Downtown Cottage Grove, finalized a Strategic Plan that served as a roadmap for its future, in addition to outlining the new organization's identity, functions and focus. This document acts as an update to the 2021 plan, taking into consideration the organization's successes since the plan's adoption, the changing landscape brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, and recent economic uncertainty.

Following the adoption of the Strategic Plan, Downtown Cottage Grove hired an administrator tasked with securing a five-year reauthorization from the Cottage Grove City Council, which it received in December of 2022. The group continues to work to support projects that honor local heritage, beautify the community, and spur the local economy.

Envisioning a Bright Future

Now, with many recent successes to its credit, Downtown Cottage Grove believes that the timing is right for a unified organization to bring together all stakeholders to forge a shared future where everyone is engaged, heard, and supported. This Strategic Plan can act as a roadmap for that unification, building on the progress made by many dedicated volunteers in the two-plus decades of operation of its parent organizations.

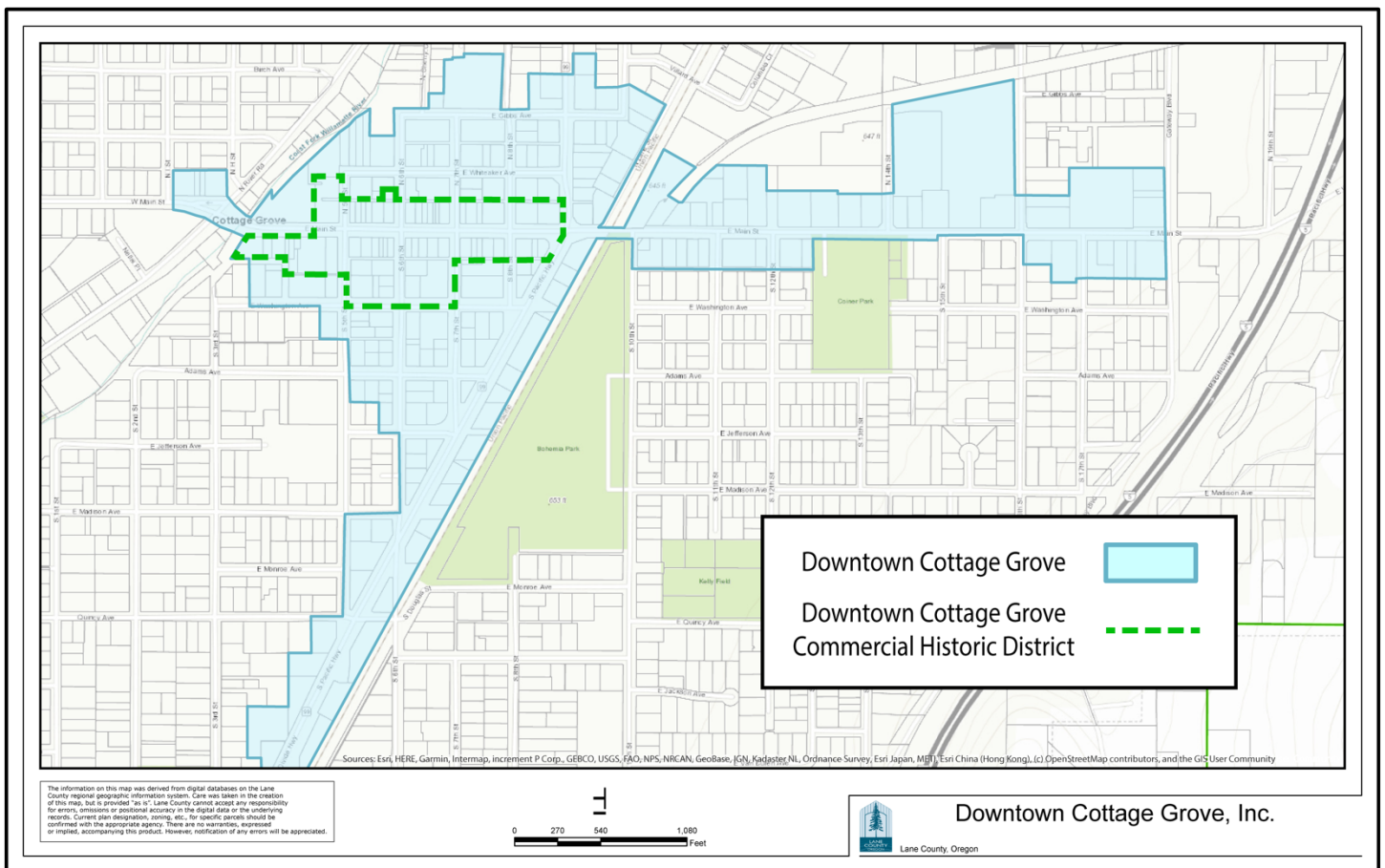
In the late-summer of 2022, Downtown Cottage Grove finds itself on a short list of applicants for a capacity grant to fund a new Executive Director position, which will bring stability to its operations and solidify its long-term vision. The organization is poised to utilize the strengths of each of its parent groups, form new and productive partnerships in its District and beyond, and help usher in a new era of prosperity in Cottage Grove.

Mission and Values

Downtown Cottage Grove works collaboratively to create an inviting downtown experience that respects our heritage, enhances our economic vitality, and beautifies our community. This mission guides DCG to:

- Be all-inclusive and welcoming to everyone
- Enable collaborations to improve the community
- Reduce barriers to participation and investment
- Encourage investing in our business vitality

Area Served



Goals, Strategies and Timelines

Timeline Key

Short-term = Within six (6) months

Mid-term = Six (6) months to two (2) years

Long-term = 2.5 years +

Ongoing = For the Foreseeable Future

Goal 1: Continue to Develop an Organization that is Sustainable and Viable, with a Mission and Focus that the Community can Believe In

Short-Term

Task 1: Establish Committees in keeping with four Main Street strategies: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization

Next steps: Administrator will assign current board members to committees, deliver assignments to Board for approval at a subsequent meeting

Task 2: Outline and finalize financial policies, including grant pass-through procedures

Next steps: Administrator will deliver outline of policies subject to board approval at regular November meeting

Task 3: Develop a board member handbook and orientation procedures

Next steps: Administrator will gather and distill information from current "board member handbook" folder, seeking help where needed; develop outline of procedures for new board members

Task 4: Recruit new board members

Next steps: Jon will connect with prospective board members (in keeping with our by-laws) and report back to Board at annual meeting

Medium Term

Task 1: Develop a long-term funding plan

Next steps: Administrator will develop a committee consisting of current board members to develop comprehensive funding plan

Ongoing

Task 1: Recruit volunteers to help carry out our mission

Next steps: All board members (and staff) will work to identify, connect with and secure help from potential new volunteers

Goal 2: Outreach -- Expand communication to be a conduit of information and to share news of progress

Short-Term

Task 1: Develop a comprehensive Communications Plan

Next steps: Administrator will continue development of Communications Plan, present draft to Board at the regular meeting in December

Medium-term

Task 1: Use Annual Meeting to communicate DCG goals, accomplishments to a broad audience

Next steps: Morph 2023 Annual Meeting into a “membership social” that can be used to sell the organization, inspire the community about its mission

Ongoing

Task 1: Identify where DCG should lead vs. taking a seat at the table

Next steps: Admin will outline community efforts throughout the calendar year, including DCG’s role, and deliver for Board evaluation of each role

Task 2: Provide a forum for idea-sharing to take advantage of community’s talents and creativity

Next steps: Admin will develop a short, 3-5 question survey that can be delivered to business and property owners during one-on-one communications; each business and property owner will be contacted twice per calendar year. Responses will be used to help determine goals and direction of the organization.

Task 3: Be more inclusive, work to expand representation

Next steps: Increase representation of BIPOC community in organization, in board, in committees, in volunteer pool, and in events

Goal 3: Economic Vitality -- Enhance economic vitality by strengthening existing businesses and attracting new business and investment

Ongoing

Task 1: Communicate with existing Businesses using all available channels

Next steps: Admin will work to establish a list of business and property owner emails and develop a schedule for in-person visits where possible

Task 2: Connect business owners and non-profits with ALL available sources of funding

Next steps: An inventory of available funding sources, including funds from local, county, state and federal agencies and private funders will be developed

Task 3: Business and entrepreneur mentorship program

Next steps: Admin will establish partnership with RAIN to augment existing programs

Task 4: Assist with reducing the number of vacancies in the District

Next Steps: Maintain a list of vacancies in the District and beyond.

Next Steps: Explore the possibility of displays in vacant storefronts, advertising something like "Imagine what YOU could do here..."

Goal 4: Design -- Encourage physical improvements to enhance the character, feel, and use of downtown while maintaining its historic, small-town character

Long-term

Task 1: Light the downtown Cottage Grove skyline

Next Steps: Explore the feasibility of lighting the skyline in downtown Cottage Grove's Historic District, particularly when electricity is made available on sidewalks.

Task 2: Continue Hearts on Main program

Next Steps: Re-make existing hearts, begin campaign to create new ones in the winter of '23.

Task 3: Support improvements to All-America City Square

Next steps: Inquire about progress of plans for improvements.

Task 4: Participate in bike/pedestrian master planning projects

Next step: Ascertain schedule of City, County projects

Ongoing

Task 2: Hanging Baskets program

Next Steps: Continue popular hanging flower baskets program; explore feasibility of City purchasing a watering truck.

Goal 5: Promotion -- Increase awareness of Cottage Grove's history, culture, and assets.

Ongoing

Task 1: Continue and enhance existing activities

Next steps: Continue support and efforts for Halloween Hootinanny, Christmas Kick-off, explore downtown shopping component of Christmas Kick-off.

Medium-term

Task 1: Include acknowledgement and awareness of local native peoples

Next steps: Re-engage History Pub on an annual or bi-annual basis; include programming about the Kalapuya people

Task 2: Encourage locals to get reacquainted with all amenities the area has to offer – many that start downtown.

Next steps: Continue popular Art Walk the last Friday of each month.

Next steps: Develop business map handout to promote businesses in the District.

Task 3: Foster and develop new events that draw locals and visitors downtown.

Next steps: Continue to develop Downtown Get-Down, Oktoberfest.



Conclusion

Much like small communities across the United States and beyond, Cottage Grove has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, and economic uncertainty continues to inform its future. And yet, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the coming years in this beautiful town:

- Much-needed multi-unit housing is currently under construction, which will allow young professionals to choose Cottage Grove as their home and young people who grew up here to remain in the community they know and love.
- Cottage Grove has always been blessed with an impressive group of volunteers who attend to the needs of those around them; these days, a new group of young volunteers is stepping up to address those needs.
- The community continues to benefit from its proximity to beautiful natural amenities such as lakes and rivers, and its proximity to Interstate 5 puts it in a position to appeal to travelers year-round.
- While its future is far from certain, Cottage Grove has already weathered difficult times in its history. And with the dedication of those who call this lovely community home, there is every reason to believe that prosperity can still be achieved for generations to come.

Utilizing the work and potential of its two parent organizations and the many dedicated staff and volunteers who have contributed to its successes over the years, Downtown Cottage Grove is in a unique position in its community to affect positive change. There is much work to do, but combining the resources and missions of the EBID and Main Street programs will give DCG the power and focus to enact the action items in this Strategic Plan, ushering in another “Golden Age” for Cottage Grove, its residents and visitors.

